

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 ALGIER 00064 01 OF 03 131642Z

53

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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R 131200Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3625

INFO AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY RABAT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 ALGIERS 0064

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, AG, MO, MR, SS

SUBJECT: ALGERIA, SPANISH SAHARA AND US ARMS DELIVERIES TO MOROCCO

REF: 75 RABAT 5961

1. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION. WITH MOROCCAN CONTROL OF SAHARA ADMINISTRATION DRAWING CLOSER TO REALITY, ALGERIANS PROFESS TO SEE THEIR REVOLUTION BESEIGED BY IMPERIALISM AND HAVE OPTED FOR MILITANT COURSE INVOLVING SUPPORT OF POLISARIO IN PROTRACTED GUERRILLA STURGGLE WITH MOROCCO. IN THS SITUATION, THEY SEE US AS TILTING TOWARDS MOROCCO. HOWEVER, OUR BILATERAL ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP AS YET UNTOUCHED, AND WE BELIEVE ALGERIANS WILL CONTINUE TO TOLERATE GRUDGINGLY OUR MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM TO MOROCCO AT CURRENT LEVEL. SUDDEN INCREASE IN ARMS DELIVERIES TO MOROCCO, HOWEVER, WOULD TEND:

A. TO STIFFEN WILL OF ALGERIANS AND TO HEIGHTEN MOROCCAN CONFIDENCE, THEREBY INCREASING CHANCE OF ALGERIAN-MOROCCAN WAR; B. TO INVOLVE US IN POTENTIALLY DAMAGING AND OPEN-ENDED COMMITMENT TO MOROCCAN REGIME; C. TO INCREASE POSSIBILITY OF ALGERIANS WORKING TO BUILD REJECTIONIST BLOC OF ARAB STATES; AND D. TO REVIVE ALGERIAN MILITANCY IN INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC DOMAIN.

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PAGE 02 ALGIER 00064 01 OF 03 131642Z

2. WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND THAT OUR FIRM, ONG-STANDING, MILITARY SUPPLY COMMITMENTS TO MOROCCANS BE HONORED APPROPRIATELY BUT THAT, UNTIL SITUATION IN SAHARA CLARIFIES ITSELF, WE AVOID HIGHLY VISIBLE NEW DEPARTURES.

3. AS TOTAL MOROCCAN-MAURITANIAN CONTROL OF WESTERN SAHARA ADMINISTRATION DRAWS NEAR, IT IS WORTHWHILE TO REVIEW BRIEFLY:

A. WHERE ALGERIA STANDS ON THE QUESTION,
B. HOW THE REGIME HERE VIEWS OUR ROLEA, AND
C. EFFECT ON OUR BILATERAL AND REGIONAL INTERESTS OF ACCELERATED ARMS DELIVERIES REQUESTED BY MOROCCO.

4. ALGERIAN ATTITUDE: THREE SLOGANS MUCH IN VOGUE HERE AT MOMENT GO LONG WAY TOWARDS EXPLAINING ALGERIAN POSTURE ON SAHARA:

A. MAHGREB OF PEOPLES: ALGERIANS APPEAR TO CONSIDER THEIR POLICY, ADOPTED IN 1969, OF PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE WITH "REACTIONARY" NEIGHBORS HAS FAILED AND TO HAVE OPTED FOR MORE REVOLUTIONARY COURSE. WE HAVE REPORTED NUMEROUS SIGNS THAT SUCH A DECISION, WHICH KNOWLEDGEABLE FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL SAYS STEMS FROM CAREFUL POLICY REVIEW, HAS BEEN TAKEN. THIS OFFICIAL ASSERTS THAT ALGERIANS NO LONGER CONSIDER IT POSSIBLE FOR THEIR REGIME AND KING HASSAN'S TO EXIST TOGETHER IN NORTH AFRICA. THIS MAY BE BRAVADO, BUT IS SIGN OF WAY ALGIERAN THOUGHTS ARE RUNNING.

B. SUPPORT POLISARIO: IN SHORT RUN, NEW POLICY WILL MEAN INALTERABLE OPPOSITION TO MOROCCO'S TAKEOVER OF SAHARA. FOR MOMENT, REGIME WILL CONDUCT STRUGGLE THGOUH GUERRILLA WAR WAGED BY PROXY VIA POLISARIO. BEACUSE OF THEIR OWN EXPERIENCE, ALGERIANS HOLD AS ARTICLE OF FAITH THAT GIVEN SUFFICIENT TIME AND DEDICATION, REVOLUTIONARY OPTION WILL TRIUMPH, AND THEY LOOK PREPARED FOR PROTRACTED STRUGGLE. HOWEVER, IF POLISARIO ITSELF NOT UP TO JOB, IT QUITE POSSIBLE THAT ALGERIANS WILL TAKE SOME
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 ALGIER 00064 01 OF 03 131642Z

SORT OF DIRECT MILITARY ACTION, EITHER IN SUPPORT OF POLISARIO OR AGAINST MOROCCO. REGIME'S PRESTIGE HEAVILY ENGAGED AND COMING TO TERMS WITH MOROCCANS SEEMS UNLIKELY FOR FORESEEABLE FUTURE. WE WOULD EXPECT MILITARY ACTION TO BE CONFINED TO BORDER AREAS, OR TO THE SAHARA, BUT SERIOUS FIGHTING COULD RESULT NONETHELESS.

C. DEFEND THE REVOLUTION: ALGERIANS HAVE MADE MUCH OF THREAT TO THEIR REVOLUTION POSED BY IMPERIALISM THROUGH ITS LACKEY, HASSAN. IN PART, THIS IS REFLEXIVE PARANOIA; WE SENSE THAT REGIME WOULD NOT FEEL RIGHT IF IT DID NOT SEE IMPERIALIST HOSTS ENCAMPED AROUND IT. WE BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT ALARM IS TO SOME EXTENT GENUINE AND THAT ALGERIANS REALLY FEAR MOROCCAN BUILDUP IN SAHARA WILL LEAD TO STRIKE AGAINST THEM. REPORTS OF GOM IRRIDENTISM VIS-A-VIS TINDOUF (E.G., ALGIERS 3488) PERSIST AND ARE, WE FEEL SURE, TAKEN SERIOUSLY HERE. RAPID ALGERIAN REINFORCEMENT OF SOUTHERN AND WESTERN PORTIONS OF COUNTRY IS AIMED ABOVE ALL AT COUNTERING SUCH A THREAT.

5. ALGERIAN VIEW OF OUR ROLE: THERE ARE TWO STREAMS IN ALGERIAN THINKING ABOUT OUR ROLE IN THIS SITUATION:

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PAGE 01 ALGIER 00064 02 OF 03 131505Z

43

ACTION SS-25

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AMEMBASSY RABAT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 3 ALGIERS 0064

EXDIS

A. IMPERIALIST MACHINATIONS: ALTHOUGH ONE OFFICIAL (ABERKANE) CLAIMS WE MISLED THEM WITH ASSURANCES FROM SECRETARY AND ATHERTON, ALGERIANS HAVE ALWAYS HAD TROUBLE ACCEPTING OUR PROFESSIONS OF NEUTRALITY ON SAHARA AND SEE OUR VOTE ON RIVAL UN RESOLUTIONS AS CONFIRMING TILT TOWARDS MOROCCO THEY ALWAYS KNEW EXISTED. THEY BELIEVE WE CONSIDER IT IN OUR STRATEGIC INTEREST NOT TO ALLOW AN INDEPENDENT SAHARA UNDER ALGERIAN TUTELAGE TO BE CREATED AND HAVE REVIVED IN

PRIVATE CHARGE THAT WE PRESSURED SPANISH TO DO THINGS HASSAN'S WAY. THEY ALSO APPEAR CONVINCED THAT OUR ARMS DELIVERIES TO MOROCCO HAVE GREATLY INCREASED. ALTHOUGH RISING TIDE OF PROPAGANDA CHARGES ATTEMPTING TO LINK US WITH HASSAN'S PARIS-MADRID-RABAT AXIS MAY NOT BE TAKEN COMPLETELY SERIOUSLY IN HIGH PLACES HERE, THERE IS CLEARLY A BELIEF THAT WE UP TO NO GOOD AND THAT OUR SUPPORT OF MOROCCO AIMED DIRECTLY AT ALGIERS.

B. BUSINESS AS USUAL: AT SAME TIME, ALGERIANS HAVE NOT ALLOWED HEAT GENERATED BY THEIR SAHARA CAMPAIGN TO AFFECT THEIR IMPORTANT ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH US, OR FOR THAT MATTER WITH SPANISH OR FRENCH. ALGERIANS HAVE INDICATED INTEREST IN CONTINUING THEIR ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP WITH US, EVEN IN WAKE OF CHEMICO AFFAIR, AND SPANISH-ALGERIAN AGREEMENTS ON GAS AND ON IMPROVING CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 ALGIER 00064 02 OF 03 131505Z

ALGERIAN TELEPHONE SYSTEM PROCEEDING. FRENCH ALSO REPORT BUSINESS AS USUAL. ALGERIANS SEEM TO RECOGNIZE THAT TO ACT AGAINST "IMPERIALIST" ECONOMIC INTERESTS WOULD HARM THEM MORE THAN IMPERIALISTS AND HAVE THEREFORE KEPT THEIR COOL.

6. US-MOROCCAN MILITARY SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP: ALTHOUGH THEY DO NOT LIKE IT, WE DO NOT BELIEVE ALGERIANS LIKELY TO BECOME EXCITED ABOUT CONTINUATION OF OUR PRESENT MILITARY SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP WITH MOROCCANS. THEY HAVE, OF COURSE, USED IT FOR PURPOSES OF SENSITIZING PUBLIC OPINION TO IMPERIALIST MENACE AND WILL DOUBTLESS CONTINUE TO DO SO. ALGIERS 3653 REPORTS RECENT EXAMPLE OF HOW REGIME WANTS MAN IN STREET TO SEE OUR MILITARY RELATIONS WITH MOROCCO, AND THERE HAS BEEN RECENT LOCAL PRESS REPORT OF ARRIVAL OF 30 M-60 (SIC) TANKS BY AIR AT CASABLANCA AIRPORT. SOME SUCH ACTIONS ARE EXPECTED OF US, HOWEVER, AND WILL PROBABLY NOT AFFECT OTHER ASPECTS OF OUR RELATIONSHIP.

7. ALGERIANS WOULD PROBABLY NOT TAKE SO COOLLY A SUDDEN QUICKENING IN RATE OF DELIVERY OF US ARMS TO MOROCCO. THEY WOULD VIEW SUCH A MOVE AS INTENDED TO BEEF UP HASSAN FOR SOME FUTURE CLASH WITH THEM AND THEIR FEELING THAT IMPERIALISTS OUT TO GET THEM WOULD BE REINFORCED. IF THEY PERCEIVED SUCH DELIVERIES AS ALTERING FUNDAMENTAL BALANCE OF FORCES IN SAHARA AGAINST THEM, THEIR REACTION COULD BE VIOLENT AND IRRATIONAL IN CONTRAST WITH RELATIVELY CLAM STANCE THEY HAVE MAINTAINED UP TO NOW.

8. IMPACT OF SUDDEN INCREASE OR SPEEDUP IN DELIVERIES TO MOROCCO MAY BE ASSESSED AS FOLLOWS:

A. ON ALGERIAN-MOROCCAN RELATIONS:

I. ALGERIANS: FAR FROM GIVING ALGERIANS PAUSE
AS SUGGESTED BY MOROCCAN AIR FORCE CHIEF RECENTLY
(RABAT 6206), AN INCREASE OR SPEEDUP IN OUR ARMS DELIVERY PROGRAM
TO MOROCCANS WOULD PROBABLY STIFFEN ALGERIAN WILL TO
SEEK MILITARY SOLUTION TO CONFLICT. ALGERIANS ARE
FEISTY PEOPLE AND, AS NOTED ABOVE, BELIEVE IN
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PAGE 03 ALGIER 00064 02 OF 03 131505Z

REVOLUTIONARY OPTION. FURTHER EVIDENCE OF IMPERIALIST
COLLUSION AGAINST THEM, PARTICULARLY IF THEIR
FGTUNES IN SAHARA SLIPPING, MIGHT CAUSE THEM TO REACH
FLASH POINT.

II. MOROCCANS: OUR IMPRESSION FROM EMBASSY
RABAT'S REPORTING IS THAT MAJOR INCREASE IN OUR ARMS
DELIVERIES TO MOROCCO WOULD INCREASE MOROCCAN WILLINGNESS
TO HAVE A GO AT THEIR BROTHERS TO THE EAST. MOROCCANS
TOO ARE COMBATIVE AND WE GATHER THEIR APPARENTLY WEEL-
TRAINED FORCES IN SOUTH LACK ONLY MATERIEL TO MAKE THEM
FEEL CONFIDENT OF RXCVZXVLMOF FIGHT WITH ALGERIANS.
MOROCCANS MIGHT ALSO FLAUNT NEW DEMONSTRATION OF OUR
SUPPORT (#)

B. ON US-ALGERIAN RELATIONS:

I. IN STRICTLY BILATERAL FIEFCFZRYE IS NOXBACH
DIRUSLWXHQGGCAL ACTION REGIME COULD TAKE AGAINST US. OUR
MISSION MIGHT BE HARASSED ANL WE COULD EXPECTOFONTINUED
OPPOSITION IN WORLD FORUMS, BUT ALGERIANS ALREADY OPPOSE
US ON MOST INTERNATIONAL ISSUES AND THEY CANNOT GET MUCH
WORSE. REGARDING ECONOMIC SIDE, WE ARE OF TWO MINDS.
IT WOULD BE HIGHLY IRRATIONAL OF ALGERIANS TO SEVER OR
HAMPER BUSINESS CONNECTION WHICH IS SO IMPORTANT TO
THEIR VITAL DEVELOPMENT EFFORT. TO DO SO WOULD INVOLVE
COSTLY DELAYS AND IN THE END COULD AFFECT THE STABILITY
OF THE REGIME. ON OTHER HAND, BOUMEDIENE SEEMS TO THINK
SAHARA IS ALSO VITAL ISSUE, AND COULD WELL ACT
IRRATIONALLY IN VEXATION IF UNABLE SETTLE IT IN WAY
WHICH PROTECTS ALGERIA'S INTERESTS AS PERCEIVED BY GOA.

NOTE BY OC/T: ALGIERS 64 (SEC 2 OF 3). (#)OMISSION. CORRECTION
TO FOLLOW.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 01 ALGIER 00064 03 OF 03 131522Z

53

ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 3 OF 3 ALGIERS 0064

EXDIS

II. QUESTION WHICH MAY WELL BE ASKED AT THIS POINT IS WHY BOUMEDIENE THINKS PATCH OF SAND WHICH IS SPANISH SAHARA IS SO VITAL. KEY WORD IS "BALANCE," WHICH WE NOTE EVEN MAURITANIANS (NOUAKCHOTT'S 0034) NOW SEEM TO REALIZE HAS BEEN UPSET, ALTHOUGH THEY DO NOT SEEM TO UNDERSTAND THEIR ROLE IN UPSETTING IT. BALANCE MEANT, IN ALGERIAN TERMS, A STABLE EQUILIBRIUM IN WHICH ALGERIA WAS CLEARLY DOMINANT POWER AND HAD VETO OVER EVERYTHING THAT WENT ON THAT WAS OF REGIONAL INTEREST. SUDDENLY MOROCCANS HAVE DEFINED ALGERIANS AND GOTTEN AWAY WITH IT. BOUMEDIENE WAS NOT EVEN CONSULTED ABOUT SAHARAN ARRANGEMENT. THIS IS NOT SOMETHING HE CAN ACCEPT WITHOUT LOSING PRESTIGE AND STATUS. HASSAN'S COMPARISON OF SAHARA AND ANGOLA (RABAT'S 0121) IS VERY APT, BUT A DIFFERENT OX IS BEING GORED ON THIS SIDE OF BORDER. BOUMEDIENE LOOKS AT SAHARA MUCH AS WE LOOK AT ANGOLA, WITH HASSAN PLAYING ROLE OF MPLA, WHILE WE AND FRENCH PLAY ROLE OF SOVIETS. FOR HIM TO ACQUIESCE IN THIS IS AS DIFFICULT AS IT IS FOR US TO ACCEPT MPLA. THERE IS GOING TO BE A NEW AND ENLARGED MOROCCO BETWEEN HIM AND THE SEA, A MOROCCO WHICH HAS THUMBED ITS NOSE AT ALGERIA, AND HIS POSITION WILL BE IRRETREIVABLY DAMAGED IF HE DOES NOT REACT AND PROVE HE IS NO PAPER TIGERS.

C. ON REGIONAL AND WORLD SITUATION: BEYOND STRICTLY
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PAGE 02 ALGIER 00064 03 OF 03 131522Z

BILATERAL RELATIONS, IMPACT OF SPEEDUP OF ARMS DELIVERIES
TO MOROCCO ON OUR BROADER FOREIGN POLICY INTERESTS
LIKELY TO BE ADVERSE.

8. COMMENTMENT: INCREASING ARMS SHIPMENTS
TO MOROCCO AT THIS TIME WILL, IT SEEM TO US,
IMPLY COMMITMENT ON OUR PART TO SEE HASSAN THROUGH HIS SAHARA
ADVENTURE AND WILL AT SAME TIME ENCOURAGE BOTH ALGERIANS AND
SOVIETS TO EXPAND THEIR MILITARY RELATIONSHIP. HASSAN ACTS AS
THOUGH HE ALREADY HAS SUCH A COMMITMENT, ALTHOUGH HE DOES NOT
SEEM TO THINK HE HAS RECIPROCAL COMMITMENT TO CONSULT WITH
US BEFORE TAKING ACTIONS WHICH MAY DRAG US INTO CONFLICT. AS
WE HAVE NOTED ABOVE AND ELSEWHERE, MOST LIKELY PROSPECT IN SAHARA
SEEMS AT MOMENT TO BE PROTRACTED GUERRILLA-TYPE STRUGGLE.
CAPABILITY OF MOROCCANS TO COUNTER SAHARA INSURGENCY, AND
FOR THAT MATTER OF ALGERIANS AND POLISARIO TO MOUT IT,
REMAINS OPEN TO QUESTION. MAJOR GESTURE OF SUPPORT TO HASSAN
AT THIS TIME, HOWEVER, WILL GIVE HIM LEVEL TO COME BACK FOR
MORE IF HE FEELS NEED TO DO SO AND WIL HAVE SAME EFFECT ON
SOVIET-ALGERIAN RELATIONSHIP. THUS, WE MAY FIND OURSELVES
ONE DAY LOCKED INTO A LONG STRUGGLE IN WHICH OUR NATIONAL
INTEREST IS MOOT, TO SAY THE LEAST.

II. INCREASED ARMS DELIVERIES TO MOROCCO ALSO LIKELY
TO PUSH REGIME HERE INTO BECOMING MORE RADICAL VIS-A-VIS
MIDEAST PROBLEM. THERE ARE ALREADY SIGNS
THAT ALGERIANS CONSIDERING ABANDONING THEIR MORE OR
LESS NEUTRAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS OUR MIDEAST POLICIES IN
FAVOR OF SEEKING COMMON CAUSE WITH QADHAFI AND
PALESTINIAN RADICALS (ALGIERS 0004). NEW MOROCCAN ARMS
DEAL WOULD BE SEEN HERE AS A CLOSING OF IMPERIALIST RANKS
AGAINST ALGERIA AND WOULD, WE BELIEVE, STRENGTHEN
ALGERIANS' TENDENCY TO THINK OF ENTIRE MIDDLE EAST, NOT
JUST NORTH AFRICA, IN "US AGAINST THEM" TERMS AND TO
BRING THEIR CONSIDERABLE ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS TO BEAR
IN LINING UP "PROGRESSIVE" REJECTIONIST FRONT TO
OPPOSE "REACTIONARIES" WHO FAVOR STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH.

III. "NEW ECONOMIC ORDER": WITH POSSIBLE
EXCEPTION OF RECENT PARIS CONFERENCE, ALGERIANS HAVE
BEEN RELATIVELY QUIESCENT ON THIS ISSUE FOR SOME MONTHS
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PAGE 03 ALGIER 00064 03 OF 03 131522Z

BUT ARE QUITE CAPABLE OF OPTING FOR CONFRONTATION
DIPLOMACY ONCE MORE. ACCELERATED OR AUGMENTED ARMS DELIVERIES TO
MOROCCO WOULD SUPPORT THESIS THAT IMPERIALISTS PREPARING BROAD-
BASED ATTACK ON THIS BASTION OF THIRD WORLD MILITANCY
AND WOULD STRENGTHEN HAND OF THOSE HERE WHO SEEK
CONTINUING CONFRONTATION WITH DEVELOPED WORLD ON ECONOMIC
MATTERS. ALTHOUGH WE NOT IN BEST POSITION TO ASSESS

AFFECT ON OUR INTEREST OF MORE ACTIVE ALGERIAN
HOSTILITY IN THIS AREA, WE NOTE ONCE MORE THAT
ALGERIANS ARE TOUGH, DETERMINED, AND THOROUGH IN THEIR
APPROACH TO INTERNATIONAL GATHERINGS AND HAVE BEEN
SUCCESSFUL IN PAST IN STEAMROLLING THEIR THIRD, OR
SOUTHERN, WORLD COLLEAGUES.

10. RECOMMENDATION: FRONT THIS VANTAGE POINT, IT
DOES NOT APPEAR THAT RISKS INVOLVED IN MAJOR NEW ARMS
DEAL WITH MOROCCO ARE WORTH TAKING. VIOLENCE IN SAHARA
IS AT LEAST AT LOW LEVEL, AND WE SHOULD NOT TAKE CHANCE
OF STIRRING THINGS UP UNTIL SITUATION CLARIFIES INTSELF
FURTHER. WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND THAT PRESENT, LONG-
STANDING AND FIRM COMMITMENTS TO MOROCCANS BE HONORED
IN MEASURED AND APPROPRIATE WAY BUT THAT WE NOT EMBARK
ON ANY VENTURES WHICH COULD BE CONSTRUED AS NEW DEPARTURE IN
US-MOROCCAN MILITARY SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP.PARKER

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